

United States Department of Agriculture

Environmental Justice

Proposed **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**



Office of the Secretary
December 1994

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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Proposed Implementation Strategy

INTRODUCTION

The President's Executive Order of February 11, 1994, on "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," requires each Federal agency to develop a specific agency-wide strategy for implementing its provisions. USDA's proposed strategy is included as the Appendix to this document.

USDA's proposed strategy reflects the work of a task force composed of representatives of the major Departmental agencies, including the Office of Civil Rights Enforcement (OCRE). It also reflects USDA's strong commitment to identifying and appropriately addressing "disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects" of our "programs, policies, and activities" on minority and/or low income populations, as required by the Executive Order.

The strategy is broadly defined for applicability to all of the seven Departmental mission areas established under the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994. These seven mission areas include --

- Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services
- Rural Economic and Community Development
- Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
- Natural Resources and Environment
- Research, Education, and Economics
- Food Safety
- Marketing and Regulatory Programs

As this is being written, the Under and Assistant Secretaries responsible for these mission areas are at work on the full implementation of the reorganization act, which was signed by the President on October 13, 1994. USDA's environmental justice strategy development and its reorganization efforts, therefore, converged to provide significant opportunities for designing complementary planning, budgeting, and administrative systems that are consistent with and supportive of overall government reinvention and reform initiatives.

Taking maximum advantage of these opportunities, USDA's proposed strategy recognizes the diversity of Departmental programs, constituents, and stakeholders at all organizational levels. It is designed to be effective, cost-efficient (making optimal use of existing USDA systems), and flexible. We also believe that it will evolve, along with the new USDA organizational structure. Appropriate adjustments will be made as we begin to more fully quantify our programmatic needs and opportunities, and as we learn from our experiences.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The fundamental *purpose* of USDA's proposed environmental justice strategy is to design and implement a flexible process that assures the full use of necessary Departmental resources in identifying and addressing program and constituent needs and opportunities, consistent with the requirements of the Executive Order. Limiting responsibility for environmental justice to a single office at the Department-level will not facilitate the accomplishment of this purpose. In USDA, a decentralized effort with necessary interdisciplinary coordination on a Department-wide basis is essential.

Based on this purpose, the overall *objectives* of the proposed USDA strategy include --

- The design, development, and implementation of an appropriate organizational structure and context for carrying out environmental justice programs.
- The identification, acquisition, and allocation of resources necessary for full program implementation.
- The development and implementation of appropriate policies, procedures, and methodologies for identifying and addressing environmental justice needs and opportunities at all organizational levels.
- Achieving the strong and continuing commitment to environmental justice principles, policies, and programs by all USDA officials and employees.
- Listening to and working in a collaborative mode with other government agencies, State and local officials, public interest groups, and the private sector in pursuing appropriate environmental justice objectives.

CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER FEDERAL POLICIES

As indicated above, the implementation of the Federal environmental justice program is congruent with a number of other governmental and departmental initiatives. The proposed USDA strategy is designed to complement and support these initiatives.

Streamlining and Reinvention

- The establishment of a centralized staff at the Department-level to administer the environmental justice program would be inconsistent with the overall streamlining principles of flattening the USDA organizational structure and reducing the size of headquarters' staffs. A decentralized effort that is thoroughly integrated with the USDA program mission areas, with interdisciplinary coordination on a Department-wide basis, is a far more appropriate and cost-effective approach.

CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER FEDERAL POLICIES -- continued

- A decentralized effort that maximizes horizontal communications and collaboration between USDA offices and officials is the most effective way to fully empower line management and employees in carrying out the environmental justice program.
- Use of state-of-the-art information technology and "centers of excellence" to accomplish specific environmental justice initiatives is both cost effective and supportive of an employee empowerment strategy.
- Empowering USDA officials at appropriate program levels is the most effective strategy to assure full and productive communications and collaboration with State and local officials, public interest groups, and the private sector (i.e., USDA's customers and the principal environmental justice stakeholders).
- Strong Department-level leadership based on a consistent commitment to overall environmental justice principles and objectives, and the minimization of bureaucratic policies, procedures, and program approval requirements will assure an effort that is quick, flexible, and fully responsive to the needs of program officials and customers at the operating levels.

Government Performance and Results

- Use of professionally acceptable methodologies for developing quantifiable performance measures and metrics at operating levels is fully consistent with and supportive of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).
- Involving USDA's customers and stakeholders in designing and conducting frequent program evaluations and assessments at appropriate operating levels is both consistent with the provisions of the GPRA and supportive of USDA's objective of increasing customer responsiveness and satisfaction.

Cost Reduction and Control

- Maximizing the use of existing USDA systems and resources, in the overall context of meeting the Department's streamlining and cost reduction objectives, will assure the minimization of new resource requirements and unnecessary expenditures.
- Extensive cost-sharing, communications, and collaboration between USDA agencies in designing, implementing, and evaluating environmental justice initiatives will minimize necessary program costs and reduce the expense of experimentation and research.

CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER FEDERAL POLICIES -- continued

Equal Program and Procurement Participation

- The identification of environmental justice needs and opportunities, and appropriate program implementation efforts, provides corresponding opportunities for the use of small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses and educational institutions to conduct essential research, evaluations, and abatement activities.
- Use of small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses and minority educational institutions in environmental justice program design, implementation, and evaluation activities will provide much needed credibility to USDA's efforts in effectively and collaboratively working with minority and/or low income populations. Additionally, use of small businesses in the affected areas can economically benefit local communities.

SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is *fully* committed to designing and implementing an environmental justice program that meets all the requirements of the Executive Order, that is consistent with other on-going Federal and Departmental policies and initiatives, and that will be responsive to the needs of our customers and stakeholders. The USDA strategy we have proposed is consistent with these objectives and others that have been outlined above. We recognize and are fully prepared to deal with the exigencies that will surely arise as USDA moves forward with a comprehensive effort. The strategy that is proposed provides a process that will enable us to respond quickly, efficiently, and in a cost-effective manner to both anticipated and unforeseen program needs and opportunities.

Date: 

Appendix -- USDA's Proposed Environmental Justice Strategy

United States Department of Agriculture
Proposed Environmental Justice Strategy

Strategy	Responsibility	Implementation Date
ORGANIZATION		
<p>1. Identify USDA Programs, Activities, and Functions Which Are or Should Be Involved in Environmental Justice Initiatives. Such programs will include --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental quality and environmental impact statements prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). • Review and compliance activities under Titles VI and IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. • Specific USDA programs having actual or potential environmental, health, and economic effects on low income, minority, and tribal populations, e.g. -- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Farm and foreign agricultural services ▶ Rural economic and community development ▶ Food, nutrition, and consumer services ▶ Natural resources and environment ▶ Research, education, and economics ▶ Food safety ▶ Marketing and regulatory programs • Contracting and procurement. • Design, construction, and operation of USDA facilities. • Regulatory development, review, and approval. • Public participation and outreach efforts. • Information and publicity on USDA programs and activities. • Other appeal and complaint processes available to the public. 	<p>Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Assistant Secretary for Administration</p> <p>-- Office of Civil Rights Enforcement</p> <p>-- Individual USDA Agencies</p>	<p>2/1/95 (Issuance of Memorandum Requesting Comprehensive Survey)</p> <p>4/1/95 (Completion of Agency Surveys)</p> <p>[Note: An initial and preliminary environmental justice survey was completed in July. Final program identification will occur after issuance of definitive guidance from the Task Force on Definitions and Standards. Due dates are contingent on timely issuance of guidance material.]</p>
<p>2. Assign Official Responsibilities and Accountability for Environmental Justice Initiatives. Responsibilities and corresponding delegations of authority will be assigned to the following organizational levels --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Assistant Secretary for Administration (dual USDA-wide leadership and accountability) • Other Under and Assistant Secretaries • Agencies and Departmental Staff Offices 	<p>Office of the Secretary</p>	<p>2/1/95</p>

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Implementation Date</i>
<p>3. Document the Assignment of Official Responsibilities and Accountability. Documentation will include --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of USDA's Official Delegation of Authorities. • Revision of official organization charts (including mission statements) at all USDA levels. • Revision of the formal functional statements for affected organizations and agencies. • Revision of official position descriptions of affected officials. 	<p>Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Assistant Secretary for Administration</p> <p>-- Office of Civil Rights Enforcement</p> <p>-- Office of Personnel</p> <p>Office of the General Counsel</p>	<p>5/1/95</p>
RESOURCES		
<p>4. Identify the Resources Necessary for Development and Initial Implementation of an Environmental Justice Strategy. Resources will be identified in the following areas --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources • Financial resources • Physical resources • Information resources • Community and other outside resources 	<p>Program Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Assistant Secretary for Administration</p> <p>-- Office of Civil Rights Enforcement</p> <p>Chief Financial Officer</p>	<p>2/1/95</p>

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Strategy	Responsibility	Implementation Date
<p>5. Develop an Inventory of Information and Community Resources Available and/or Needed for Program Implementation. The inventory will include --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information contained in Departmental and agency databases or files. • Relevant assessments and evaluations. • Departmental and agency program plans. • Lists of businesses, and national, regional, and community organizations active or interested in environmental justice. 	<p>Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Assistant Secretary for Administration</p> <p>-- Offices of Civil Rights Enforcement, and Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization</p> <p>Agency Heads</p>	<p>4/15/95</p>
<p>6. Include Environmental Justice Criteria in the Evaluation of the following Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and population studies. • Program assessments and evaluations. • Applicable program enforcement activities. • Public participation and information initiatives. • Specific programs having a significant environmental justice impact. 	<p>Deputy Secretary</p> <p>Office of Budget and Program Analysis</p> <p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p>	<p>5/1/95</p>
GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES		
<p>7. Development and Issuance of a Letter or Memorandum from the Secretary to Under and Assistant Secretaries, and Agency Heads. The Secretary's letter or memorandum would --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly endorse the concept and principles of environmental justice. • Assign dual and coequal responsibilities for program development, implementation, and oversight to the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and the Assistant Secretary for Administration. • Provide a status report on activities completed, planned, and in progress. 	<p>Office of the Secretary</p> <p>Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Assistant Secretary for Administration</p>	<p>2/1/95</p>

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Implementation Date</i>
<p>8. Development and Issuance of a Secretary's Memorandum to Establish a Strong Commitment to and Support for Environmental Justice. The Secretary's Memorandum will be issued to all employees and will contain --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vision statement identifying environmental and health issues as integral components of USDA's programmatic activities. • A statement of environmental justice goals, objectives, and priorities for USDA. • An overall agenda for program development and implementation. • General management and oversight responsibilities within USDA. • Target time frames for development and implementation activities. • Assurance of grassroots input (at the agency and community levels) for policy and program development. 	<p>Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Assistant Secretary for Administration</p> <p>-- Office of Civil Rights Enforcement</p>	<p>3/1/95</p>
<p>9. Development and Issuance of Draft and Final USDA Strategies for Implementing Environmental Justice Programs in USDA. The USDA strategy will be submitted to the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice, as required by E.O. 12898 (dated 2/11/94).</p>	<p>Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Assistant Secretary for Administration</p>	<p>12/30/94 (Draft) 2/11/95 (Final)</p>
<p>10. Development and Issuance of a Departmental Regulation (DR) on Environmental Justice. The DR may include documentation on such issues as --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall Government policy. • USDA policy. • Assignment of functions and responsibilities. • Programmatic requirements and procedures. • Development of agency strategic plans (including outcome and evaluation criteria). • Coordination mechanisms. • Training and orientation requirements. • Reporting requirements. 	<p>Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Assistant Secretary for Administration</p> <p>-- Offices of Civil Rights Enforcement, and Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization</p>	<p>5/1/95</p>

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<p>6. Include Environmental Justice Criteria in the Evaluation of the following Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and population studies. • Program assessments and evaluations. • Applicable program enforcement activities. • Public participation and information initiatives. • Specific programs having a significant environmental justice impact. 	<p>Deputy Secretary</p> <p>Office of Budget and Program Analysis</p> <p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p>	<p>5/1/95</p>
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<p>11. Revision of Other Applicable Departmental and Agency Regulations to Incorporate Environmental Justice Policies, Procedures, and Requirements. Existing regulations that may be affected and revised include --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEPA compliance. • Civil Rights Act Title VI. • Facilities design, construction, and management. • Public appeals, complaints, and reviews. • Public participation. • Specific program entitlements and availabilities. <p>USDA's general approach will be, wherever possible, to use and coordinate existing programs and systems to accomplish the objectives of the environmental justice program rather than to develop separate programs and systems that are costly to establish and maintain, and difficult to monitor and control.</p>	<p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p> <p>Office of the General Counsel</p>	<p>8/1/95</p>
<p>12. Inclusion of Environmental Justice Goals and Objectives in Applicable USDA Strategic Plans. Insofar as practicable, the strategic program and administrative plans of Departmental staff offices and agencies will be updated and revised to incorporate the goals and objectives for environmental justice that have been established at the USDA-level, and to include any agency-specific goals and objectives that may be appropriate.</p>	<p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p>	<p>10/1/95</p>
<p>SPECIFIC STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGIES</p>		
<p>13. Development of an Automated Information System at the USDA-Level to Track, Monitor, and Coordinate Agency Environmental Justice Activities and Experiences. A relational database using state-of-the-art information technology would be developed to receive, compile, and synthesize agency status reports, research findings, and experiential information. Inputs would be made through electronic media to minimize data entry requirements.</p>	<p>Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Assistant Secretary for Administration</p> <p>-- Office of Information Resources Management</p>	<p>10/1/95</p>

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<p>14. Use of Formal Project Management Methodologies. Adequate and professional planning and implementation of USDA agency environmental justice projects is critical to their success. Use of the formal methodologies and automated design and tracking systems that are available will assure --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective planning of projects and activities. • Establishment of realistic goals and timeframes. • Systematic assignment of appropriate responsibilities. • Effective management and supervision. • Anticipation and allocation of adequate resources. • Meaningful relationships with clients. • Timely tracking and reporting. 	<p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p>	<p>5/1/95</p>
<p>15. Establishment of Realistic and Quantifiable Performance Measures at All USDA Organizational Levels. Consistent with the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act, USDA and the USDA agencies will include adequate performance measures in all strategic and projects plans to determine --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well we are doing. • How others (e.g., stakeholders) perceive what we are doing. • How well we have involved State and local officials, interest groups, and the public in our planning, design, implementation, and follow up efforts. • What, specifically, we have achieved and at what cost. • What we have learned along the way. • What remains to be done. • How we can do it better. 	<p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p> <p>Program Managers</p>	<p>10/1/95</p>

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<p>16. Frequent Reviews, Assessments, and Evaluations of Agency Strategies and Activities. Using a variety of internal and external resources, including interdisciplinary oversight committees and working groups, USDA will assure --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a system for the peer review of scientific projects or strategies. • A multidisciplinary approach to planning and oversight activities. • The involvement of multiple internal and external groups (e.g., industry, university, State, local, and public interest groups). <p>These efforts will facilitate --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The availability of information for sharing and coordination. • The identification of <i>emerging strategies</i> that are successful and effective. • The abandonment or revision of strategies that are not successful or cost effective. • The use of evaluations as training and development tools. • The understanding and support of essential outside groups and populations. • The availability of technical assistance that may not be available within USDA. 	<p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p>	<p>7/1/95</p>
<p>17. Use of USDA's Current Research Information System (CRIS) as a Standardized System for Compiling and Maintaining Information Regarding Formal Research Projects. Use of CRIS will --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce or eliminate duplication of research efforts. • Minimize research costs. • Facilitate tracking and monitoring of dedicated resources. • Promote multidisciplinary research and the sharing of scientific information. 	<p>Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics</p>	<p>6/1/95</p>
<p>18. Development and Use of a Human and Technical Resource Information Database. In recognizing the eclectic and multidisciplinary nature of environmental justice initiatives and activities, USDA agencies will need assistance in identifying the proper mix of professional and technical resources needed for effective planning, implementation, and evaluation of their programs and projects. The identification of appropriate internal and external resources can be time-consuming and difficult if it is done repeatedly on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis. Compilation of human resource and technical skills that are available, and that have been successfully used by others or in connection with past projects, using a structured database would be far more effective and efficient than the maintenance and use of paper files. Fortunately, USDA already has an automated system that can be used as a model for this database.</p>	<p>Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Assistant Secretary for Administration</p> <p>-- Office of Information Resources Management</p>	<p>8/1/95</p>

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<p>19. Extensive Use of Public Participation Methodologies and Systems. Involvement and participation of stakeholders at all organization levels is critical to a successful program effort. The following methods, systems, and technologies will be used on an as needed basis --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public hearings and town-meeting sessions regarding identified local needs and opportunities. • Public outreach and education. • Assignment of agency environmental justice responsibilities at all organizational levels, and their clear identification in public and internal phone and other directories. • Liberal use of press releases and public information announcements at all organizational levels. • Electronic hotlines and bulletin boards, particularly at the local project levels. • Use of interdisciplinary teams of experienced professionals, drawn from all USDA sources, to deal with the public and handle sensitive or critical situations on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis, wherever the need may arise. 	<p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p>	<p>4/1/95</p>
<p>20. Interagency Coordination, Cooperation, and Resource Sharing. It will be essential for the USDA agencies to pool their resources in the development of programs and systems that will be necessary for program and project implementation. In addition to interagency research and abatement projects that may be carried out when multiple USDA (and other government) agencies are involved, cooperation and coordination in the development and maintenance of administrative systems are, perhaps, just as important. Such systems may include --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment and development of automated databases and user applications. • Acquisition of appropriate hardware, software, and other technology. • Multiple-agency use indefinite quantity contracts (IQCs) or blanket purchase agreements (BPAs) for acquiring professional or technical services. • "Centers of Excellence" for training, evaluations, assessments, and other program activities. • Use of Federal Executive Boards, where available, for information sharing and collaborative efforts in appropriate metropolitan areas. 	<p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p> <p>Program Managers</p>	<p>5/1/95</p>

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<p>21. Bibliographic Citations and Indexes. USDA agencies will use the resources of the National Agricultural Library (NAL) to compile and publish bibliographic information on environmental justice issues for both internal and public use. Innovative use of NAL resources and technology (e.g., automated literature searches in multidisciplinary and cross-cutting research areas) can help --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid "reinventing the wheel." • Assure access to essential information for USDA officials at all organizational levels. • Publicize relevant internal and external research efforts. 	<p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p> <p>-- National Agricultural Library</p>	<p>4/1/95</p>
<p>22. Use of 1890 Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, and other Minority Educational Institutions to Provide a Significant Portion of the Necessary Services and Products to Support Environmental Justice Activities. The use of these educational institutions will not only help USDA meet its equal opportunity participation goals and objectives, it will also add substantial credibility to the Department's efforts in effectively cooperating with minority and/or low income populations.</p>	<p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p>	<p>4/1/95</p>
<p>23. Coordination and Use of Available Systems. Successful implementation of environmental justice initiatives within USDA will require maximum use and expansion of Departmental and agency systems that already exist. Development of new systems solely for environmental justice purposes will be costly and will not assure the integration of applicable programs and projects with established and on-going initiatives.</p>	<p>Under and Assistant Secretaries</p> <p>Agency Heads</p>	<p>2/1/95</p>

Date:

